

Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting Summary
April 26, 2018 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM
MassDEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA

Introductions & MassDEP Updates

John Fischer of MassDEP gave an update on Recycling Business Development Grants, an upcoming study on statewide disposal capacity, the development of a mattress recycling market in Massachusetts and the potential future for mattresses.

Q: How much capacity data is already accounted for? How much is currently unavailable?

A: We already have solid waste facility and transfer station data, which we are providing for the consultant to start. They might reach out to the people who operate facilities as well. For other sectors such as recycling and composting, the data isn't as complete. They might conduct surveys to fill in the gaps and build on that data.

Q: Is there a possibility of reconstituting the data subcommittee?

A: We likely will form some kind of a committee along those lines. Or, there might be a series of meetings rather than a committee. We do plan to conduct data-focused discussions.

Q: Will we get an update on the capacity study at a future meeting, and will it be in the same format of stakeholder conversations and feedback? Will the contractor's scope of work be distributed in advance?

A: We will provide information in advance of the meeting, such as the study scope and the study outline. The consultants will join us for that discussion, and we will take input and comments then.

Recycling IQ Kit: Lessons from the Field

Erin Victor of MassDEP presented on the Recycling IQ Kit and introduced Julia Greene from the City of Lynn, who shared data and her experience from implementing the IQ Kit in her city. For more information and details, please see the presentation posted with these meeting notes.

Q: When somebody receives an "oops tag," does that mean the recycling does not get picked up for two weeks? Why didn't that cause a riot? Also, in the city of Boston, they tell you to put the recyclables out in a clear plastic bag

A: In Lynn, they expected people to be upset and to receive a lot of calls, but they did not. One point to keep in mind is that when people have trash in their recycling carts, they can move the trash to the trash cart and have it collected there. And then that leaves more room for recyclables in the recycling cart. Sometimes people argued that they recycled correctly and blamed neighbors for contamination. In those instances, we would send the truck back to pick it up.

Different program standards in different communities do create confusion. It would help to have more uniform standards.

Q: Was it difficult to convince people to OK the project beforehand?

A: No, decision makers all accepted the program. It was helpful that Lowell successfully implemented the pilot program and was able to work out the logistics.

Q: Did the facility receiving the recyclables notice any differences?

A: We don't know for certain because they did not conduct any waste audits, however getting clearer data will be a focus going forward. However, the rejection rate for carts dropped from 32% in the first week to 10% in the last week, so the program was effective at reducing contamination where it was implemented..

Q: What are the fines, and do people actually pay them?

A: \$50 first offense; \$100 second; \$300 additional offenses. Landlords are getting frustrated; some with six units have chosen to get a dumpster instead of doing curbside. Since the fine shows up at the end of the year with taxes, some landlords have negotiated it down.

Q: Does Lynn have mandatory recycling?

A: Yes.

Q: What is the "bang for the buck?" Are the costs of the Recycling IQ Kit offset by the results of cleaner materials going back to the processor?

A: We are already seeing an increased cost for contaminated recyclables and a drop in contaminated carts where the program has been implemented, so it seems successful. We will have better data this upcoming year.

Q: Do you have any sense of whether the outreach will have to be ongoing?

A: We will find that out soon. This year's grant includes funding to go back to contaminated areas and check them. In October, we did find that the contamination stayed down. However, there is a lot of turnover in some of the multifamily units, so outreach has to be ongoing.

Q: Did you apply for the highest possible amount of money for the IQ Kit?

A: Yes.

Q: The rider on the lease is a brilliant idea, where did it come from?

A: The idea came from New York City, where Mayor Bloomberg added it to the city website for landlords to download.

C: The rider is available online under All Recycling IQ Resources

Q: Was Lynn's initial contamination rate unique?

A: No, sadly there is a lot of contamination out there. The average contamination is 20-25% at the MRF. Some communities are higher, some lower.

C: The goal of the IQ Kit is to target the "problem" recycling areas of the community.

Q: How did you address the issue of which types of plastics are recyclable?

A: We didn't focus on that. Rejected carts included three or more things that definitely should not be in the cart (e.g., plastic bags, food, tanglers), but we did not get too specific about plastics.

Q: How big was the volunteer group?

A: We hired five college and high school students to work 20 hours a week over the summer.

Solid Waste Master Plan: Municipal Recycling and Waste Reduction Strategies

Brooke Nash of MassDEP led a discussion about the goals, challenges and recent achievements of municipal recycling programs in the Commonwealth. For more information see the presentation posted with this meeting summary.

Q: The Environmental Business Council (EBC) has a solid waste committee, which includes an ad hoc subcommittee comprised of consultants, facility owners and operators. We composed a wish list, a consolidation of everyone's positions, to present to MassDEP for feedback. Some of the recommendations address the target areas Brooke mentioned. What's the best way to engage in a discussion about this?

A: MassDEP encourages EBC to provide this input to us. We are receptive to holding meetings with EBC as well as with other groups to supplement scheduled Solid Waste Master Plan-related meetings and obtain more input. MassDEP also encourages EBC as well as others to submit any input to MassDEP via dep.swmp@state.ma.us at any time.

Q: Environmental non-profits would also like to be included in additional meetings. Is anything going to be done to address certain goals from the last Master Plan that have not been attained, such as enforcement on the Waste Bans?

A: MassDEP would be happy to meet with these and other groups to obtain additional input. There will be some goals and action items the Master Plan won't be completed by 2020, however MassDEP is continuing to work on implementing many of these programs. For example, one comment we continue to hear, and we agree with, is that there needs to be better information and awareness about Waste Bans. Recently, we developed a fact sheet on waste ban compliance to send to retailers.

Q: Where in the timeline (if anywhere) will MassDEP interact with the State House? Is there a statute that prohibits communication?

A: Generally, MassDEP focuses on implementing the regulations and programs within our statutory authority and does not focus on legislative initiatives. Any legislative initiatives would be coordinated through our Commissioner's Office and Legislative Liaison.

C: This is one of the recommendations from EBC. There needs to be a higher level of understanding of MassDEP priorities at the Legislative and the Secretariat level.

C: The current environment presents a moment to stop focusing on recycling and start focusing on "reduce." We can't ignore the fact that we are living in a world of cheap consumption.

Construction and Demolition Material Waste Reduction Strategies

Mike Elliott of MassDEP presented information on and facilitated a discussion about C&D recycling in Massachusetts. He summarized the themes that are under discussion at the C&D Subcommittee as it works on developing a C&D Action Plan to be incorporated in the next 10-year Solid Waste Master Plan. The themes can be grouped into one of three broad categories: 1. jobsite/source waste management; 2. enhanced C&D facility performance; and 3. develop/expand end markets. Mike also provided a brief update on the Recycling Business Development Grants awarded to C&D Processors in the 2017 grant round: United Materials Management of Millbury and ReEnergy of Roxbury. For more information, please see the presentations posted with this meeting summary.

C: It would be great to have better technology to help with separation. In wood markets, there might be a demand for certain products, but the spec is harder to achieve given the nature of the incoming materials and fluctuating markets. Demolition contractors constantly try to do source separation on job sites and send different materials to different places, but the materials are so mixed it becomes extremely difficult to extract pure material ready for recycling.

C: MassDEP lacks the tools to achieve these aspirations. Renewable energy initiatives and GHG emission standards included financial incentives as well as high level, interagency support. These C&D problems are persistent, and there has to be a way to create incentives for these materials. The Secretariat needs to examine this from a system-wide perspective. These problems have existed for the past 10-15 years, and unless we get support from higher levels, then we won't be able to accomplish the goals.

Q: What is the ReEnergy project doing with their materials?

A: Bulky rigid plastic is going to a plastic recycler, and asphalt shingles are recycled as well.